



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

19th District News

Winter 2001



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Dear Friends:

The state of Washington's first legislative session of the 21st century is upon us.

- **Taxpayer dollars need to be stretched.** We've got to stretch your dollars tighter than ever, that is, as we work not just to provide essential services and programs — but also to meet demands contained in recent voter-approved initiatives.
- **Shoreline rules need to be balanced.** Rural Washington should be able to opt out of new rule proposals — and agriculture should be exempt from these updated guidelines.
- **Transportation challenges need to be answered.** After thoroughly reviewing a Blue Ribbon Commission's ideas, it will be our responsibility to put the most cost-effective plans to the test before we let them hit the road.
- **Election rules need to be tightened.** Because the U.S. Supreme Court last year tossed California's open, blanket-primary system out the window, we have to make changes in our state's similar system.

In this edition of your *19th District News*, we've included a closer-than-usual look at the state budget.

We're always grateful for your time and interest. And as always, we ask that you contact us to share your own ideas and thoughts.

Best wishes,

Brian Hatfield
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Mark Doumit
State Representative
19th Legislative District

◆ *State budget:*

More than ever, we must follow very strict boundaries

The Washington state budget for the upcoming 2001-2003 biennium presents — to put it mildly — an unprecedented set of challenges. A lot of legislators and a lot of other people this year are going to learn what the word “No” really means.

First, a little background.

According to the latest state-revenue forecast, we can expect to take in \$22.302 billion in the next 24-month budget period (July 1, 2001, through June 30, 2003). The spending limit imposed in Initiative 601 (approved by voters several years ago) is \$22.174 billion. Further, it's estimated that we'll need \$22.2 billion in the new budget to maintain our present level of programs and services.

Here's an additional rub: The financial impact of the recent, voter-approved initiatives means that developing our new spending plan is more challenging than usual — again, to put it mildly. **The three major, budget-related initiatives passed by Washington voters in last fall's election are:**

- **Initiative 728** — “Shall school districts reduce class sizes, extend learning programs, expand teacher training, and construct facilities, funded by lottery proceeds, existing property taxes, and budget reserves?” **I-728 is expected to mandate the use of \$486 million in the state budget, which makes this money unavailable for other programs and services.**
- **Initiative 732** — “Shall public school teachers, other district employees, and certain employees of community and technical colleges receive annual cost-of-living salary adjustments, to begin in 2001-2002?” **I-732 will earmark the use of between \$345 million and \$450 million in the budget.**
- **Initiative 722** — “Shall certain 1999 tax and fee increases be nullified, vehicles exempted from property taxes, and property tax increases (except new construction) limited to two percent annu-

ally?” **I-722 will reduce available money in the new state budget by another \$39 million.**

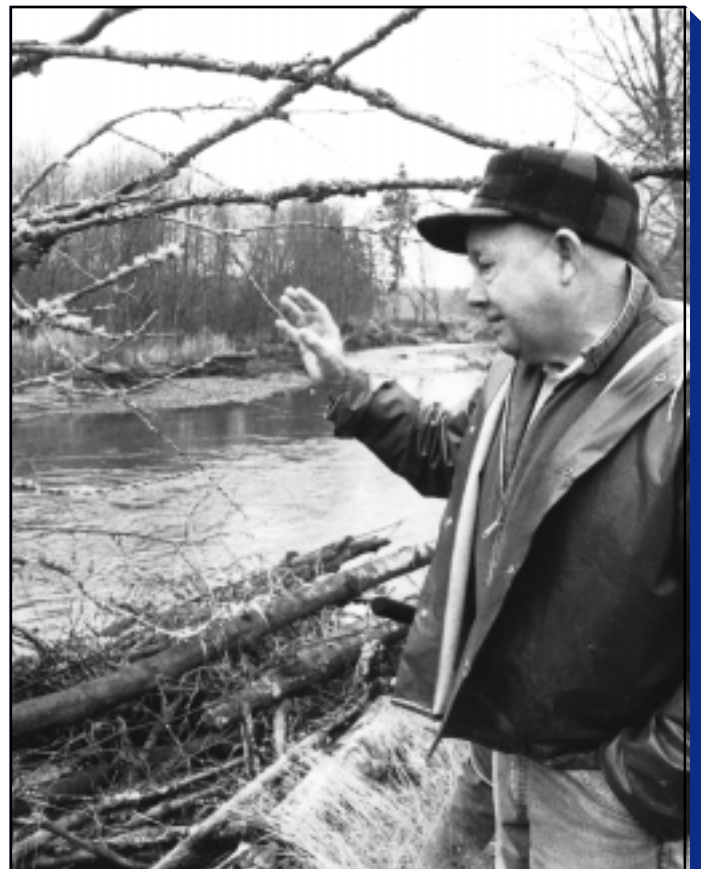
Soaring health-care costs — especially in the area of children's health insurance, our state's Basic Health Plan, and our smaller hospitals — are also knocking a hole in available revenue for programs and services.

But none of this means we're surrendering to the budget challenges — we didn't run for office to run from responsibility. And we have no intention of using voter-approved initiatives as an excuse for running away from hard decisions.

◆ *Shoreline laws:*

All we are saying is give reason and flexibility a chance

We oppose Department of Ecology (DOE) plans for updating shoreline regulations. **In looking over these proposals, it's obvious that — once again —**



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we've got to beat the drum for common sense and flexibility.

A preliminary DOE plan for shorelines set off a firestorm of public criticism two years ago — and we've always emphasized the need for fairness in this guideline-writing process. We strongly maintain that the department has not been authorized to update the shoreline regulations.

We are advocating that any new plan:

- **Allow hard-hit Washington regions — and that includes at least 30 of the state's 39 counties — to opt out of new shoreline regulations recently proposed by the Department of Ecology.**
- **Exempt agriculture from the new shoreline-guidelines, and make the department recognize and respect the real-world concerns we have in rural Washington about the shoreline-update.**
- **Reflect the fact that the environmental problems our state faces are not in the rural areas — families and businesses in our part of Washington have a basic incentive to do the right thing for our natural resources. (It's not just a bureaucratic theory for us —it's a way of life!)**

Our bottom line is that we must respect the interests of local people — farmers and other businesses, as well as city and county governments. **Please let us know what you think about our position on shoreline-protection rules!**

◆ *Transportation:* *We will use 'blue-ribbon'* *ideas to get discussion rolling*

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, created two years ago by the Legislature, has taken a serious look at needs and priorities in our state's transportation-infrastructure. A lot of publicity has accompanied the multibillion-dollar price tag that comes along with the commission's bipartisan recommendations.

In a nutshell, the panel (among other foundation statements) said that our state must make sure:

- **Roads, streets and highways are kept in good repair.** (In 1998, about 10 percent of Washington's roads were listed in poor condition.)
- **Bridges should be structurally safe and able to stand up to an earthquake.** (Almost a thousand bridges in the Evergreen State can be found in the very-high-risk category.)
- **Washingtonians should spend less time in their car.** (Although we've grown 40 percent in population in just the last 20 years, total vehicle miles traveled on our roads has soared by 60 percent!)



Check the panel's Web site at <http://www.brct.wa.gov/> if you'd like more information about the commission's recommendations.

Here are some facts regarding the dispersal of funds for the various parts of our state, including our own Southwest Washington:

Pacific County and Wahkiakum County receive more in the current distribution system than is levied against their citizens. In the most-recent time period for which statistics are available (between 1989 and 1998), Pacific County received \$2.84 in project money for every tax dollar sent to the state. Wahkiakum County did even better, collecting \$7.55 for each dollar sent. Up the road, Grays Harbor County was on the receiving end of \$1.40 in project money for every dollar they contributed. Cowlitz County, though, received 81 cents.

The comparable figures for King County? People in Seattle and other towns in the state's largest metropolitan region collected 88 cents on the dollar — and in Pierce County they received only 67 cents.

Rural Washington — very much including rural western Washington — does pretty well in the distribution system that we've got right now.

The central Puget Sound region (everything between about Everett, Bremerton and Olympia), for instance, contributes 61 percent of our state's total

transportation revenue, but receives 58.2 percent of the transportation benefits. The rest of western Washington (not including Vancouver's urban area) kicks in 14.5 percent of the revenue and collects 16.9 percent of the distribution.

Let's look at the total state and federal transportation taxes and transportation-revenue distribution in that same 10-year period. Pacific County received \$3.26 for every tax dollar, Wahkiakum County collected \$7.74 (much better than any other Washington county), Grays Harbor County took in \$1.25, and Cowlitz County received \$1.34.

King County, on the other hand, received \$1.08 for every tax dollar (so the Seattle-area did at least get back a little more than it sent in to state and federal governments). Again, though, the rural areas for the most part come off quite a bit better than the metropolitan regions.

◆ *Elections:*

We must guarantee our citizens' basic voting rights

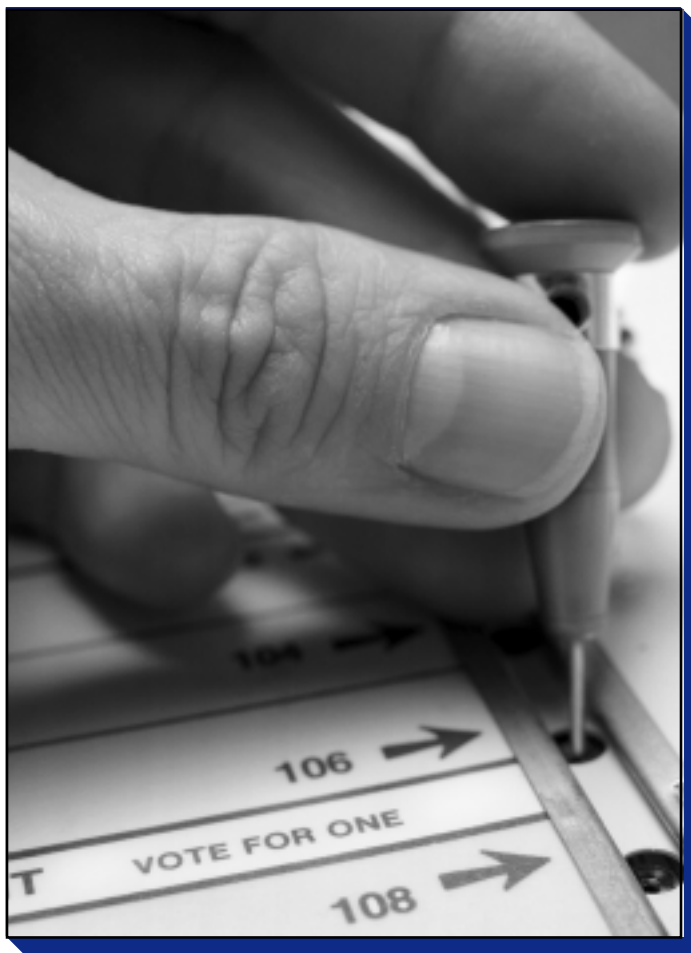
Washington state's primary-election law needs an overhaul, thanks to a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision against a similar system in California. The two major parties here are waiting to see how the Legislature addresses both the high court's ruling against our system and our responsibility to guarantee fundamental voting rights.

Our blanket primary has no requirement that you declare a party affiliation when you register (you can vote for anyone and any party you want). There is no public record of either the candidate or the party you support.

Most state laws across the country require major political parties to use primaries to nominate their statewide candidates. As a rule, the top vote-getter from each of the parties advances to the general election. Alabama and Virginia laws permit the parties to use either a primary or a convention, and some other states require political parties to hold preprimary conventions to



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endorse their candidates. Further, a lot of states require either that you declare a party affiliation when registering or that you make this declaration when you vote.

This legislative session, we'll discuss a variety of options for changing the current system.

Other states, for instance, now choose from among several different primary-election alternatives.

Some of their systems:

- **Require party identification at voter-registration.**
- **Exclude independents and voters not affiliated with a major party.**
- **Allow independents to select the ballot of a major party.**
- **Require voters to publicly declare which**

party's ballot they want at the polls (similar to our state's presidential primary held in February last year).

- **Permit the choice of a party ballot in the voting booth.**
- **Don't require party-registration and do allow voters to vote for any candidate on the ballot.**
The top vote-getters then advance to the general election — a requirement that could result in two candidates from the same party facing each other in the general. In this type of system, a candidate receiving more than 50 percent of the primary vote is declared the winner.

◆ ***On-line investing:
Don't be afraid to ask questions
before making any final decisions***

Thinking about making a killing in cyberspace?

You might want to check information provided through the state Department of Financial Institutions — the department's Securities Division, to be exact — to bring you and others up-to-speed on on-line investing.

The Website is at **www.investingonline.org** and you should at least take a look at what it has to offer before you get carried away.

Clicking the Website actually takes you to the "Investing Online Resource Center" — a noncommercial entity whose sole purpose is to help people who are taking a look at the idea of on-line investing. There's a quiz you might want to take to see whether you're an appropriate candidate for this brave new financial world.

The Website also explodes several myths about investing on-line, including the notion that you can buy and sell stocks 24 hours a day, seven days a week — and that your on-line investing is a one-way, sure-fire ticket to riches.

You can call the Department of Financial Institutions in Olympia at 360-902-8700.

◆ *Wildlife:*

Call this number to report dangerous bears and cougars

Please use this toll-free phone number (provided by the Department of Wildlife) to report any alarming encounters you have with a bear or a cougar: (888) 879-6069.


The frequency of bear and cougar encounters with humans — as some Washingtonians know all too well — has gone up in recent years. These are incidents that represent a serious public-safety concern — or situations in which a cougar or bear has either killed pets or livestock or caused some other kind of damage to your property. Call this other number — (360) 902-2200 — to report non-emergency bear or cougar sightings.

Wildlife officials say it's important to make the call as soon as possible. For one thing, officers sent out to respond to an incident need to get there as quickly as possible to take care of it.

Hotline calls between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday will be answered by enforcement staff. **If a live human being doesn't answer during those business hours, though, please leave a message — department staff will call you.** Please also leave a message if it's before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m. weekdays or anytime on the weekend.

There were 927 cougar complaints in 1998, for example, and 694 the following year. Both years' figures were way above the 495 complaints reported in 1996. In 1999, there were 74 livestock attacks and 45 reports of pets preyed on.

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